Teaching Philosophy Statement

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My teaching philosophy is based on the principle that learning is a cumulative and reflective process in which students progressively build on prior knowledge to develop skills and complex concepts. For this reason, my teaching practices are dedicated to guiding students in bridging their existing knowledge with new material, fostering a sense of ownership over their learning. This belief stems from my experience as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) in quantitative methodology courses within the Educational Measurement and Statistics (EMS) program at the University of Iowa, where I am pursuing my PhD.

My teaching practices are mainly focused on the comprehension of the course contents, the internalization of what has been learned, and the development of research skills. This is especially relevant at the beginning of the semester, as prior knowledge of quantitative methods and the ability to adapt to the course vary across students depending on their personal and professional background and interests. To collect information about this, I ask students about their area of work or study, what they know about quantitative methods, and whether they are familiar with any statistical software such as SPSS, R, Stata, or Mplus, which helps me to facilitate the learning process considering their perspectives. For example, many students initially struggle with interpreting interactions in regression models. To work on this, I usually ask the student to think about an investigation they would like to conduct, what variables they would include, and what relationship there would be between these variables in the form of predictors and outcome (the conceptual definition of the regression model). Then, I ask whether the relationship between a predictor and the outcome might change due to variation in the value of another predictor. The answer is usually positive, so I say: well, that *change* in the effect of the predictor is what the interaction is capturing in the model. When students have an ‘aha!’ moment, they feel more prepared to engage with the practical aspects of statistical analysis, class activities, and homework.

As the course progresses, students acquire knowledge and skills that allow them to deepen and customize their learning. To reinforce this process, I have seen that semester-long research projects are ideal to apply, reflect, and expand on what is learned in class. As a student, these types of activities allowed me to understand the usefulness of quantitative methods and the specific advantages/disadvantages of some data analysis techniques. As a GTA, I have seen that these projects make students reflect on the relationship between the research process and quantitative methods and gain experience in how to design, develop, and present a research project. In my work with students during these projects, I have learned that the value of quantitative methods lies in their usefulness in providing evidence to help students answer questions. That is why I believe these projects should allow students to choose what to investigate; my role then is to guide and provide feedback on the work step by step (e.g., defining the problem, describing the methodology, and conducting analyses).

From the beginning to the end of a course, my teaching practices (mainly as a GTA) aim to facilitate learning and co-construct knowledge. Through my pedagogical work inside and outside the classroom, I intend to give students what they need to understand, apply, and judge the use of quantitative methodology, which contributes to their autonomy and professional growth.